

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 73

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**Final Report
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**Visit Conducted on:
October 25 - 26, 2000**

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Students with Disabilities

(Commendations, Citations and Suggestions for each school)

Note: *It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.*

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I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted at SAU 73 comprised of the following schools: Gilford Elementary school, including preschool programs, and Gilford Middle/High School. The visiting team met on October 25 and 26, 2000 in order to review the status of special education services provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the Special Education Director, building principals, regular and special education teachers, related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via telephone. Throughout the visit, the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted January 10-11, 1995*

In 1995, the Gilford School District was part of SAU 30, Laconia. It has been a separate school district for two years. At that time, there were very few citations, in fact only two paperwork citations at the elementary school and only three at the high school. It is apparent that issues brought up in the previous on-site have been addressed. The visiting team was very impressed with the new Special Education Plan and all of the new forms that have been revised to meet new standards and are still being revised to address the latest requirements of IDEA. Overall, files seemed to be organized and complete. Having the LEA representative clearly identified and having his or her signature on IEP and Evaluation paperwork, which was identified as a problem in the last on-site appears to be corrected. Many of the current citations will be taken care of as the new forms begin to be used by all members of the special education team. Such cites as how parents will be informed of progress, evidence of LRE being discussed annually and written notice of meetings being given to parents will be resolved

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

It is apparent that this new school district is supportive of its special education students. This support from the community, school board, administration, and staff is noted in the hiring of two new people this year to facilitate the integration of students into the school and community and in adding to the budget a contingency for unexpected special education costs. The new director of special services has developed a new special education handbook, provided training and in-service for general and special education staff on transition, and initiated a program for parents of young children which involves outside agencies and school staff. Parents see

her as an advocate for them, one who wants them to be involved in every aspect of their child's' program. New programs, such as the "check in/check-out" program at the middle/high school are proactive and successful. The community based integration program is an excellent example of transition services for students, both at the preschool level and at the high school level.

Throughout the on-site visit, the visiting team was impressed with the efforts of all staff to provide quality programming to all students in the least restrictive environment. An atmosphere of caring, support, dedication and mutual respect for students and staff was evident in visiting each school. Paraprofessionals are used throughout the SAU and are viewed as a major support system to the special education staff. All special education staff are currently certified in their area of specialty. The district is still seeking one full time special educator. In the meantime, other special educators are filling in and assuring that services are provided. At the high school, while staff make use of space to attempt to limit distractibility, team members observed that the open space might be distractible to both special and general education students.

There was some confusion around whether related services were being provided at the middle school. When the team interviewed the service provider, she indicated that she was only consulting with the child and had only seen her once this year. However, the student's IEP indicated that she was to receive direct service. This was being resolved while the team was still on-site.

In regards to community based preschool programs, the requests for approval of two programs (Lakes Region Day Care Center and Saint James Preschool) are included with this report. The team member who reviewed preschool programs noted strong support and coordination between early support services and preschool programs and between preschool programs and the elementary school.

Team members who visited the elementary school questioned the use of a "quiet room" in that building. While it is not an issue for this on-site team, it should be noted that the Department of Education "philosophically" does not support the use of such spaces. While the New Hampshire Department of Education has not recently issued guidelines to school districts with regard to "quiet or time-out" rooms, they indicate that whenever a child is removed from his or her regular classroom, it could be a violation of FAPE.

In summary, it was a pleasure for the team to view the excellent programs for special education students in the Gilford School District. The concerns were minor and the progress toward full inclusion is evident and major.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: SAU-WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- There is administrative support and involvement in the special education process in each building.
- The community, school board and superintendent are supportive of special education programs.
- The leadership skills of the Director of Special Services, including close work with families, supervision of staff, opportunities for training, developing proactive new programs and collaboration have been an asset to the SAU.
- The addition of two staff to provide transition and integration services to children is commendable.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

There are no SAU wide citations. Those that are listed in the individual school reports are minimal.

SUGGESTIONS:

There are no SAU-wide suggestions. See individual reports for building suggestions.

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Preschool District Staff 2) St. James - Laconia

COMMENDATIONS:

- The district staff works well with families to provide services.
- There are strong relationship with Family Centered Early Supports & Services.
- The new position of Inclusion Facilitator has greatly improved services.
- The new forms are beautiful and well designed.
- There are many training opportunities for teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, etc.
- The district is providing speech therapy for children that need only articulation.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

CFR 300.347(a)(7)(ii) 1 file: lacked specific statement of how parents are informed of progress toward annual goals.

CFR 300.552 1 file: lacked evidence that LRE is determined annually and meets criteria.

SUGGESTIONS:

- It is difficult to determine if parents are informed that preschool tuition could be paid for by the district (also transportation) and how services are determined by the team. It appears that parents are comfortable but it is a little difficult to tell for sure.
- Child Find efforts may need to be increased. Though numbers of preschoolers has increased greatly in the past year, the percentage still seems low for the general population.
- It may be time to work towards increasing staff time spent in community program (educator, S/L, OT, PT) to provide more, or better consultation to regular preschool teachers. This would also give sped staff and therapists an opportunity to see child interacting with typically developing peers, and integrate therapy into program.

GILFORD ELEMENTARY

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Grade 2 2) Grade 5

COMMENDATIONS:

- A strong sense of warmth, community and collaboration exists among all staff.
- There is a commitment to inclusion and teamwork between regular and special education and staff
- The school is commended for their efforts in family involvement, parent volunteer program and parents trust in staff and programs.
- The Special Education Handbook is well written and a wonderful resource.
- All staff are very child centered and respectful of all children.
- Community Resource Awareness Day is a benefit to all.
- All identified children are involved in at least one extra curricular activity.
- Daily meeting of all grade 5 teachers is commendable.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.02(b) 3 files – There was no evidence that parents are receiving written notice of the referral.

Ed. 1115.06 3 files – no evidence that LRE is determined annually (New Special Education Handbook contains a form that will rectify this).

Ed. 1125.03 3 files – The written prior notice does not state how parents can contact sources to obtain assistance.

CFR300.347(a)(7)(ii) 3 files – There is no evidence or a statement indicating how parents will be informed of their child's progress toward the annual goals.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Adequate space was a concern of regular education (grade 5) and service providers.
- Continue, minimally, on an annual basis the "Community Resource Day.
- Continue staff training including regular education, special education and paraprofessionals.
- Keep in mind how the number of pullout services affect a child's social development and interactions.

GILFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Learning Lab 2) Modified Reg. 3) Check-In and Check-Out

COMMENDATIONS:

- The new program for checking in and out appears to provide special needs students with valuable support to organize themselves for the day at school and prepares them to transition home with homework assignments and a review of their day.
- Organization of the Learning Lab seems to provide simultaneous supports for multiple students.
- The dedication and caring of the support staff enhances student performance.
- The updated Special Education Handbook is a valuable tool.
- The six-week exploratory instruction in computer technology, industrial arts, etc., helps reach students through all modalities and aids transition to high School.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

<u>Ed. 1107.3(a)</u>	1 file: No MR certified person present at evaluation meeting.
<u>Ed. 1109.04(a)</u>	1 file: Procedural safeguards need to be given at each notice of an IEP meeting.
<u>Ed. 1111.01</u>	1 file: Extended school year consideration was not completed prior to 4/30 or 60 days before starting.
<u>Ed. 1115.06</u>	1 file: No evidence that LRE is determined annually.
<u>Ed. 1123.05</u>	1 file: Annual notice of Rights/Procedural Safeguards was not given at reevaluation of child.
<u>Ed. 1125.03</u>	1 file: Written Prior Notice is missing from file.
<u>Ed. 1125.04(a)(4)</u>	1 file: Consent to evaluate for annual summative Test of Academic Performance.
<u>CFR300.347(a)(7)ii</u>	1 file: There is no notation as to how a parent will be informed (nor how often) of child's progress.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Provide additional training in writing specific measurable goals, objectives, and intermediate benchmarks.
- Note on IEP's whether or not a child will participate in regular P.E.
- Continue to revise and update Special Education Handbook.
- Work to improve communication between regular, special education, guidance and administrative staff.

GILFORD HIGH SCHOOL

PROGRAM(S) VISITED:

1) HS Integration/Main Stream

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff is very supportive of students and their needs.
- Staff use space so to limit distractibility.
- Communication between the regular education team, paraprofessionals and special education departments appears strong.
- The continued communication between special ed., teachers, paraprofessionals and regular education staff definitely benefits the students and the completion of student outcomes.
- The implementation of IEP modifications/plans were exhibited during observations.
- Changes in forms will assist with the compliance of student's folders.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1109.04 2 files; lacked documentation that procedural safeguards mailed to the parents with the notices.

CFR 300-346(a)(2) 1 files: No documentation of state or district wide testing.

CFR 300-347 1 files: lacked documentation of how the parents will be informed of the child's progress toward annual goals was not documented.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The High School seems to be a very distracting environment for students. The district may want to investigate different environments that are less distractible.

OUT OF DISTRICT FILES

COMMENDATIONS:

- Special Ed Director appears to be well aware and involved with out-of-district programs.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

<u>Ed. 1107.03(a)</u> <u>Ed. 1107.07(c)</u>	1 file: lacked evidence of teacher certified in the area of suspected disability on the evaluation team.
<u>Ed. 1109.01(m)</u>	1 file: lacked transition statement of an 18 year old student.
<u>Ed. 1109.03(d)</u>	1 file: lacked documentation of steps to obtain participation of other agencies.
<u>Ed. 1109.04(d)</u> <u>CFR 300.345</u>	1 file: notice did not indicate purpose was to develop the statement of transition services or list other agencies invited.
<u>CFR 300.347(a)(7)</u>	1 file: did not have a statement of how program will be measured.
<u>Ed. 300.347(c)</u>	1 file: did not include a transfer of rights statement 1 year before the age of 18.

SUGGESTIONS:

NONE

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU 73

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

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NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 3 FILES

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

All students appear to be in compliance.

SUGGESTIONS:

NONE